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Lawsuit Forces CIA Confession On MK-ULTRA

More than six years ago, I first exposed the horror of MK-ULTRA, the CIA's supersecret program that used unwitting victims as living test-tubes for bizarre, mind-altering drugs. The nightmare still isn't over for some of the tortured guinea pigs.

Bits and pieces of the story have come out over the years in various forums. But now, for the first time, the CIA has been forced to acknowledge in a judicial proceeding the terrifying scope of its experiments.

The CIA confessions were extracted in writing by Atlanta attorney Thomas E. Maddox Jr., who represents four of the prisoners who were experimented on in the Atlanta federal penitentiary in the 1950s and 1960s. The victims, in their 50s, are seeking \$500,000 apiece in damages from the government.

One of the plaintiffs, Farrell V. Kirk, was used as a chemical mixing bowl even though the CIA knew he was mentally unstable. After being dosed with a variety of drugs, Kirk attempted suicide by burning and hanging, and once tried to gnaw an arm off.

A second victim, Don Roderick

Scott, says he suffered permanent brain damage from the tests. A third, John R. Maole, is a fugitive, and the fourth, James T. Knight, is still in prison. All four say they suffered flashbacks and other severe symptoms for years after they were drugged by the CIA.

Here are some of the shocking admissions made by the Justice Department on behalf of the CIA, under questioning by the victims' attorney:

- MK-ULTRA's purpose was "research and development of chemical, biological and radiological materials [for use] in clandestine operations to control human behavior." The CIA hoped the "psychoactive chemicals" would work on the victim's mind and emotions to "release him from the restraint of self-control."

- The program was also intended to develop an "anti-interrogation" drug to counter Soviet truth serum, or possibly to scramble a CIA agent's brain so that any confession to his captors would be useless.

- MK-ULTRA and its successor program, MK-SEARCH, were terminated in part because the drugs and other techniques proved "too unpredictable in their effect on human beings."

- Nevertheless, the CIA pursued another chemical program, MK-BURN, until at least 1970. One of its researchers was Dr. Carl Pfeiffer, who also worked on MK-ULTRA. Pfeiffer has sworn he was merely

trying to find a cure for mental illness. That is what the Atlanta convicts were told.

- The materials developed and tested were "hallucinogenic or [would] otherwise affect the central nervous system of humans." The substances included various LSDs, mescaline, a truth serum and powerful amphetamines.

- The CIA can produce no written consent forms, and admits no followups were made of the guinea pigs. Normally there weren't even doctors on hand the night after the convicts were drugged. Some prisoners were so hopped up they had to be given more drugs "to attain sleep."

- Two victims were transferred to a medical facility "because of apparent mental problems," but the CIA denies this was because of "an adverse reaction" to its drugs, which were intended to duplicate psychosis.

- Though expense records were kept meticulously—\$349,445.10 for the Atlanta subproject—the overall records were ordered destroyed in 1973 by Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, a top CIA scientist. Pfeiffer destroyed the records in 1972.

Footnote: The CIA refused comment. Gottlieb told my associate Les Whitten the Atlanta project "was in keeping with the kind of experiments being done at that time." Pfeiffer "doesn't ordinarily take calls," according to a voice at his New Jersey office.